

CONFERENCE OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS of Schools and Programs for the Deaf, Inc.

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Joseph P. Finnegan, Jr.
Executive Director

January 30, 2007

Laird Stone, President
Idaho State Board of Education
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0037

Dear Mr. Stone,

On behalf of the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD), I write regarding the Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind (ISDB). It is my understanding that the Idaho State Board of Education (SBOE) is considering closing ISDB and adopting a different educational model. In order to provide appropriate educational programs for deaf and hard of hearing students, CEASD respectfully requests that SBOE maintain ISDB as a school for deaf children and for blind children.

Schools for the deaf are a necessary part of the continuum of alternative placements for many deaf and hard of hearing children. It is beyond dispute that deaf and hard of hearing children have unique language and communication needs that must be met if they are to succeed educationally, and for many deaf and hard of hearing children, schools for the deaf are the most appropriate environments in which those language and communication needs can be met. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, through its "special factors" ^[1] provisions recognizes the importance of developing a strong foundation in language and communication for deaf and hard of hearing children through direct communication with peers and teachers. The National Agenda on Achieving Educational Equality for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students, ^[2] the National Association of State Directors of Special Education's Educational Services Guidelines, ^[3] and State deaf and hard of hearing education reform efforts in conjunction with the National Deaf Education Project ^[4] all recognize that access to communication should drive educational decision making, including placement decisions, throughout the IEP process for deaf and hard of hearing students.

Because schools for the deaf are specifically designed for children with hearing loss, for many children they are the appropriate placement, and in fact, are the least restrictive environment in which they can achieve successful educational outcomes. Schools for the deaf include teachers and support personnel who are trained and certified in educational approaches and methods, both visual and auditory, that are effective with students with hearing loss. Direct communication among a critical mass of peers and with supporting adults is one of the hallmarks of special schools for children who are deaf, thus creating an

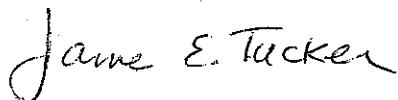
environment that is communicatively accessible to the child day and night. Schools for the deaf include every child with hearing loss as an equal, valued member of the community.

According to the Office of Performance Evaluation's Evaluation Report, parent and school district satisfaction with the ISDB is high. Therefore, we hope that the SBOE will be very cautious about jeopardizing the capacity of ISDB to serve these families and districts and will solicit their input in determining the future of ISDB. In addition to including families in discussions of the future of ISDB, CEASD respectfully suggests that any decision making process about ISDB include the Deaf Community and experienced deaf educators and administrators. These individuals have a unique understanding of deaf and hard of hearing children and their educational, social, personal and cultural needs.

Founded in 1868, CEASD is committed to the promotion of excellence within a continuum of equitable educational opportunities for all children and adults who are deaf or hard of hearing. CEASD advocates on behalf of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and supports the efficient and effective management of schools, programs, program service centers, and governmental units offering educational and related programs and services. CEASD's membership consists of over 100 member schools and programs serving over 12,000 deaf and hard of hearing children and their families.

Once again, CEASD urges you to maintain the continuum of alternative placement options by continuing to support and value the existence of ISDB. CEASD offers its support and resources of its members to ISDB and SBOE as you work through your decision. Thank you very much for considering our thoughts.

Very truly yours,



James E. Tucker
President, CEASD (www.ceasd.org)
Superintendent, Maryland School for the Deaf

C: Mr. Harvey W. Lyter III, Interim Superintendent, ISDB
Mr. Wes Maynard, Executive Director, Idaho Council for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing
CEASD Board of Directors

¹ The Individualized Education Program Team shall:

(iv) . . . in the case of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, consider the child's language and communication needs, opportunities for direct communications with peers and professional personnel in the child's language and communication mode, academic level, and full range of needs, including opportunities for direct instruction in the child's language and communication mode . . . (20 USC 1414(d) (3) (B) (iv)).

² The National Agenda Advisory Board includes: Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Association of College Educators – Deaf and Hard of Hearing; American Society for Deaf Children; Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf; Convention of American Instructors of the Deaf; Council for Exceptional Children – Division of Communication Disorders; National Association of the Deaf; and State Departments of Education and Local Education Agencies.

³ NASDSE.org.

⁴ NDEPnow.org